

Fishing Vessel Circular Letter No. 049
28 June 2023
Series: GEN-2023

To: All Ship Owners, Operators, Deputy Registrars, Resident Agents, Representatives, and other Stakeholders

Subject: **Conservation and Management Measure Prohibiting Fishing on Data Buoys**

Reference: Issued in accordance with Part VIII, Section 50(1)(c) of the High Seas Fishing Act, 2013

Circular Superseded: FVC-008/2011 – Fishing Data Buoys

BACKGROUND:

Many nations use and deploy data buoys to collect information for better weather and marine forecasts, support fisheries by producing data on sea surface and subsurface measurements, support maritime search and rescue operations, and gather vital information for research on meteorological and oceanographic topics and climate prediction.

It has been determined that fishing vessel vandalism and damage to data buoys pose a serious problem that can cause significant loss of data that is essential for weather forecasting, the study of marine conditions, tsunami warnings, and support for search and rescue operations at sea. As a result, countries expend a lot of time and money trying to find, replace, and repair data buoys that have been damaged or lost due to fishing methods and vandalism.

It is crucial for nations to adopt conservation and management measures for responsible fishing operations, because highly migratory species, like tuna species, congregate near data buoys and that a reduction in fishing near data buoys may help in the efforts to reduce the mortality of juvenile tunas.

MEASURES ADOPTED BY BELIZE

For the purpose of this circular, data buoys shall be defined as floating devices, either drifting or anchored, that are deployed by governmental or recognized scientific organizations or entities for the purpose of electronically collecting and measuring environmental data and not for the purpose of fishing activities. As a result, the following measures shall apply.

1. All Belize flagged vessels engaged in fishing or related activities shall be prohibited from intentionally fishing within one nautical mile of or interacting with any data buoy in any ocean, which but not limited to, encircling the buoy with fishing gear, trying to or attaching the vessel, or any fishing gear, part of portion of the vessel, to a data buoy or its mooring; or cutting a data buoy anchor line.
2. All Belize flagged fishing vessels are prohibited from taking on board a data buoy while engaged in fishing for tuna and tuna like species in any ocean unless specifically authorized or requested to do so by the country or owner responsible for the data buoy.
3. Vessel masters are encouraged to keep watch for moored data buoys at seas and to take all reasonable measures to avoid fishing gear entanglement or directly interacting in any way with those data buoys.
4. Fishing vessels that become entangled with a data buoy should immediately remove the entangled fishing gear with as little damage to the data buoy as possible.
5. Vessel masters are encouraged to report any data buoys observed to be damaged or otherwise inoperable along with the date of observation, buoy location, and any discernable identifying information contained on the data buoy.

APPLICABILITY

This circular applies to all Belize flagged vessel engaged in fishing or fishing related activities or intending to operate under the Belize flag.

MAINTENANCE

Stakeholders shall ensure that this Circular is acknowledged and observed.

COMPLIANCE AND ENFORCEMENT

Failure to comply with any Circular shall result in disciplinary actions taken in accordance with Belize's Sanction Regulations S.I. 32 of 2014

IMPLEMENTATION

This Circular shall be implemented with forthwith.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information direct all inquiries about this Circular to the Director of High Seas Fisheries of the Belize High Seas Fisheries Unit, Ministry of Finance, Government of Belize.

Issued by

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